9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

a powerful factor in the history of human culture, and that it needs spiritual as well as economic force to bring about new growth. But I am no supporter of those who, indulging in sentimental regrets for a Celtic twilight of doubtful authenticity, find in the past a Golden Age to which they would have us return. Our view should be forward. There is in Ireland, thanks to the astonishing virility of peasant tradition, a great opportunity to save and transform rural life, as happened in Denmark, before it has declined too far. In that revival education must play its part. A geographer may be forgiven for attributing the general ignorance about the foundations of rural culture to the very backward position of geography teaching in Ireland, where none of the Universities has given the subject full recognition—a state of affairs perhaps unparalleled in any part of Europe. Moreover, except for a few well-equipped and well-staffed schools, the standard of geography teaching in the schools is half a century behind the times.

Peasant ownership, for good or ill—it has not so far provided the answer to Ireland's problems—is now established. In Northern Ireland 38% of the farm holdings are under 15 acres in extent and only 4% exceed 100 acres: 27½% are between 15 and 30 acres (the corresponding figure in Eire is 27%). Cheap electricity may provide a basis for restoring rural industries as an essential and intimate part of the life of the countryside. The undoubted virtues of the Ulster character were surely related to the traditions of peasant weavers before that tradition was submerged in the Industrial Revolution. The essentials of the country craft—simplicity of form, soundness of construction and fitness to purpose—must somehow be restored. The traditional skill in wood working can be revived: re-afforestation should be undertaken on bold lines, and every effort made to save the native flora and fauna from further destruction. The difficulties of the present time are forcing on our attention the view expressed by many leading thinkers, that the rural tradition is of special importance for the maintenance of society, and that there are

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

There are three or four small shops, but only one has a regular counter, and it is also the only public-house on the islands. 444

There is no regular employment for labourers, but occasional work is paid for at the rate of 1*s.* 6*d.* a-day. 465

The women, besides attending to the ordinary domestic duties, help the men at field work, at seed time and harvest, and at drawing sea-weed for manure; they card, dye, and spin the wool for clothing, and in rough weather, when supplies from the mainland are short, grind oats or barley in the quern, either for the cattle or for domestic use. This is extremely hard work, and requires two women, one to work at the grinding, and the other to feed the grain from her apron. They also employ part of their time at quilting or knitting. The average annual money handling of a family is from £40 to £50. 462 [434]

2. *Family Life and Customs.*—The children of a family, who are usually numerous, are sent to school when about four years of age, and at first attend regularly; but as they grow older their attendance is often very irregular, as they are liable to be kept at home by their parents to assist at field work in times of pressure. They are said to be very smart and intelligent, but their progress is interrupted and checked by this cause. At the age of fourteen or fifteen years, when they have reached the second stage of fifth class, they are taken from school, and then enter into the regular routine of household and farm work until they either marry or emigrate. They marry young, generally for purely family reasons, romance not entering into the case. Courtship as a regular institution does not exist; and if exceptional cases occur they must be rare; as for two young people of opposite sexes to be seen walking together is looked upon as being decidedly wrong. Matches are arranged by the parents from considerations of suitability of families, not, as in many other places, by money bargains. As soon as an arrangement is come to between the elders, usually before Shrove, the young man goes and asks the girl personally; if he be refused, which sometimes, though seldom, happens, he considers himself disgraced, and is often inconsolable. The marriages often take place without any rejoicings or social reunions, the young couple going quietly home after the ceremony is over. In some cases they set up house afresh on their own account, but if the bridegroom be the eldest son who usually inherits the parent's house, &c., the bride goes to live with his family. 871● 584 585 591

Mr. Michael Lavelle, to whom I am indebted for much valuable information as to the customs and folk-lore of the people, informs me that he has heard that sometimes, on the occasion of a wedding, 585 [115]

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

from plants growing in the district as formerly, but are imported. 286
There are several weavers in the district, and the clothes are made up by a local tailor. One unusual occupation, that of cloth miller or presser is carried on by a man in Belmullet, who uses a rather primitive press of his own construction.

There is very little regular employment for labourers, except 464
that given by a few of the resident gentry and some of the people of Belmullet. Labourers receive 1*s.* 6*d.* a day, or a 1*s.* and their [465]
food; if at harvest time, threshing or employed at cutting turf, slightly more, about 2*s.* a day.

Little or no work is done by the majority of the men during the [222]
winter months, except to gather a little drift weed along the coast.

The women attend to the ordinary duties of the house, assist at 462
field work and at bringing home turf; they gather and dry carrageen moss (*sphaerococcus crispus*) which they sell at the rate of 2*s.* a stone (unbleached); they also card and spin the wool. Old women often get employment going from house to house oiling, carding, and [887]
spinning the wool for the household; for this work they receive 2*s.* a week and their keep.

2. *Family Life and Customs.*—The general characters of family life 871 ●
are much the same as those of the people of Inishbofin.

The children, who are usually numerous, are sent to school, if at all, at about five years of age; they show plenty of aptness at acquiring knowledge, but as their attendance is very irregular, through their being wanted at home to help their parents, their progress is much impeded. When they reach the age of fourteen or fifteen years they leave school and enter into the regular work of the household until they have attained means either to marry and settle down or to emigrate.

Some few of the girls, after leaving school, go out as domestic 357
servants either in local situations or to England or Scotland.

Both sexes usually marry young, the matches being arranged by 58
the parents, and money rather than romance being the chief element in the case, as a projected marriage is often abandoned owing to disputes between parents without the young people themselves being consulted in the matter. Love-making, except in the case of engaged couples, but seldom occurs, but that it does sometimes happen is [832]
shown by the number and variety of love-charms and omens. As in most other parts of Ireland the majority of marriages occur before Shrove. When full agreements have been made by the parents, the young man goes and asks the girl personally. If he be refused, he does

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

463 survivors of these wandering folk are the tinkers, sworn enemies
326 of the farmers but useful in many ways to the farmers' wives. Though miscalled gypsies they are of native Irish stock and have little, if any, Romany blood. Numbering between 5,000 and 6,000 but declining, they now find little scope for their traditional skill as white smiths but subsist mainly on collecting scrap metal and dealing in horses. Down to recent times their
[273] services were in demand for making and repairing the stills in which home-made whiskey (poteen) was manufactured.
[554] Weavers and tailors as well as tinkers were despised by farming folk as 'travellers', whereas the smith was held in high esteem.

Most of the home industries depended on wood and other
463 plant products, natural or cultivated, and on the skin and hair of
178 animals. Nearly all these crafts are now dead or dying and their products, perishable by nature, are either gone or fast disappearing. A few skills live on, others survive in children's pastimes or in the memories of old people. The unwritten lore of
[824] the countryside included a vast store of information on all the
[825] varied trees, plants and animals, birds and fishes which in times past played their part in the lives of the people. Nearly every
[861] species had its practical, medicinal or magical uses, and through careful observation, empirical knowledge and a wealth of poetic fancy, a vivid interest in the world of nature was maintained and passed on from one generation to another. Much of this lore has been lost with the decline of the Gaelic tongue and the spread of formal education and book-learning. The
[871] country school must conform to a clerk-breeding curriculum designed to meet urban demands. The destruction of woodland and the debasement of standards of living which followed the adoption of the alien potato and the consequent famines had serious consequences on home crafts. Then mass-produced goods came to drive out many products which depended on a discriminating knowledge of local materials. Thus barbed wire has taken the place of its rustic prototype—a hay-rope strung with thorns—and binder-twine has killed a dozen varieties of home-made ropes and thongs. The economist might think of them as bonds tethering rural communities to the soil, but to the sociologist they imply spiritual as well as physical links with mother earth.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

number was reduced to only 580,000. The great famine of 1845 to 1852 and the tide of emigration which followed brought about a rapid decline in the use of the language. In addition, the elementary school system was directed toward substituting English for Irish, and until 1922 instruction in most schools was given in the English tongue. It was reported in 1946 that only about 40,000 persons in the Republic used Gaelic as their true vernacular (Freeman 1960:166–169).

All Inis Beag folk of the age of eight years and older speak English as well as Irish, many with greater fluency than mainland peasants, for English is taught in the school and is spoken with Gaelic in homes where a realistic attitude toward emigration prevails. As in most of Ireland before 1922, English was employed as the medium of instruction in the school, and sermons in the church were delivered in English; even today the islanders confess to their priests in English—a fact little known. The widespread ability of the folk to use English is not readily apparent, however, for several reasons: the people are subsidized by the government to have their children learn Irish at school, and curates have urged, even threatened, that the foreign tongue not be spoken on moral and nativistic grounds; teachers have ridiculed English speech idiosyncracies of certain students and adult islanders before their pupils and, as a result, have induced shyness among the youth; the secretiveness of many persons and suspicion of outsiders of others prevent them from revealing their linguistic aptitudes to strangers; a few folk are nativists themselves and shun the use of English for that reason; and, finally, I have witnessed islanders "cod" (jokingly misinform) outsiders as to the true language situation.

The English speech of the islanders, as is common throughout rural Ireland, represents a syncretism of Gaelic and English forms; that is, English vocabulary is merged with Irish grammar, and Gaelic phonemes and speech rhythms influence English pronunciation. Irish terms commonly are incorporated into English speech, and, conversely, English words form an important part of the vocabulary of the folk when they employ the vernacular. Nativists are extremely critical of English vocabularly borrowings, a point of view not shared by the islanders; the latter are equally critical of the creation of new Gaelic terms by nativists for cultural innovations. The folk, among themselves, also are critical of the language revival movement, since most of their number must emigrate to English speaking countries where lack of mastery of the tongue places them at a competitive disadvantage. Irish speech is judged by nativists as "good" or "bad" according to at least three criteria: the prevalence of despised English words, the retention of traditional Gaelic terms, and the richness of Irish idiom. Many observers, including linguists, believe that the "best" Gaelic in Ireland is spoken in Inis Beag and nearby islands; however, my wife and I had visitors from the mainland who were declared to be more proficient Irish speakers than the island folk themselves by Inis Beag people who met and talked with them. In this case, probing revealed that the evaluation was based on our friends' mastery of idiomatic expression and clarity of pronunciation. The ability of the native speaker to combine accent and idiom is known as *blas*, and the folk can ascertain readily whether a stranger has learned Gaelic "from the cradle" or "at the school" (called "Christian Brothers' Irish" after teachers of that order).

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

next to the new one. Built in 1899, the present chapel has a bell tower in its yard, 346
and 500 feet from it on a trail leading north to the common land is a shrine made
of cement depicting Christ crucified, which was constructed in 1950. A curate who 793
lives in a rented house in Low Village looks after the spiritual needs of the people 794
of Inis Beag and those living in Inis Thiar. He travels to and from the neighboring [505]
island by canoe, although occasionally he takes advantage of the ship servicing the
islands when its schedule coincides with his own. The region has been served by
a parish priest since late in the eighteenth century following the relaxation of the
Penal Laws, but only in 1919 did a curate take up permanent residence in Inis Beag.
Prior to that the island was visited by clerics from the parish church and sometimes
from the mainland.

It is not known when the first elementary school was established in Inis 871
Beag, but the islanders claim that at least some formal education was provided
from the early nineteenth century on, first by landlords and then by the govern-
ment. Today, a "national school" with seven grades, or "standards," built in 1943, 872
stands on a terrace above the east end of the strand. Its 90 pupils are taught by 346
three instructors, two of whom are local girls and the third, the "headmaster," an
outsider. The base of the school building and the low walls surrounding it are
banked with accumulating sand, which has created much resentment against the
government for having put up the structure there rather than in a more protected
location, as advised by the folk. The former school, located next to the watch tower
on the promontory above Castle Village, was sold to an islander after it was
abandoned, and he partially razed it to obtain valuable building materials.

Three keepers are maintained in Inis Beag by the Irish Lights Service. 502
One or two men and their families made up the lighthouse personnel until 1929,
when a severe storm greatly damaged the installation and caused the women and
children to be ordered off the island for their safety. The keepers are rotated, with
two men on duty while a third vacations for two weeks, and from time to time
islanders serve as relief and maintenance workers and help unload supply ships.
A symbiotic relationship exists between the folk and the keepers, wherein the [476]
former are employed in the above and other capacities by the service, and the
latter dispense kerosene and other equipment, it is alleged, to pay for goods and
services provided them, such as craft objects which are sold on the mainland for
personal profit. The keepers attend church, utilize the shops, and occasionally pay [674]
visits to local households, and these visits are reciprocated by a few men and
children.

Trails, wells, springs, land areas, and coastal features also figure promi- 823
nently in the lives of the islanders. Place-names have been attached to each, most
of which were created prior to this generation, although fields in certain land areas
still are being named as they are manufactured. It is thought that many of the
place-names refer to archaic events, persons, and geographical conditions, and
legends have come to surround some of them. Others are meaningless in that their
constituent words no longer are understood because of either sound shifts or sheer
cultural loss. The derivation of place-names is a common topic of conversation,
and often prolonged and heated arguments arise over, for instance, the identity of
the man after whom a crag is named or the time at which buildings disappeared

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

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tunity to create additional capital; they are content to rest on their psychological
[157] laurels, are limited in their aspirations, and are indolent. They betray a smugness
[124] of attitude much resented by their less prestigeful fellows. A woman spoke contemptuously of the "great estates" boasted of by these men, when she discussed with me the many land disputes that she had witnessed during her lifetime.

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556 When one asks the folk to rank prestige symbols and the positions of
423 individuals in the status hierarchy, the only consensus which emerges is the placing of land and capital at the apex of the rank order of symbols, the assigning of men who possess these in greatest quantity to the top of the hierarchy, and the placing of landless men at the bottom. Least prestigeful among the landless are those who are descendants of fisherfolk, most of whose families were recent migrants to Inis Beag. An example of the verbal abuse to which they are subjected is a remark made to one of them by the king in a heated argument, who said, "Why don't you spend your time gathering periwinkles like your father?"; the man replied with equal venom, "Who was your father, a king?" Other prestige symbols delineated by the folk, although not mentioned by all and variously ranked, are advanced education, prestigeful kin abroad, economic skills, and singing, dancing, and storytelling abilities. Strength and courage occasionally are cited, but they are considered symbols of a past era (which nativism and primitivism make difficult to assess) and have come to lose much of their significance.

[178]

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556 Only one family in the island prides itself on its material possessions,
[123] because of the influence of the householder's brother in the United States who sends remittances, so it is said, and often visits Inis Beag for lengthy stays. I was asked to take photographs of this family, whose members posed before various pieces of modern furniture and appliances, to be sent to relatives—the only such
[356] request ever made of me. There are a few families, however, which pride themselves
[515] on the neatness and cleanliness of their houses and streets and the appearance
171 of their members, and they are apt to denigrate families which are slovenly. The
[184] lack of emphasis on material possessions in Inis Beag presents a startling contrast to the situation which prevails in most of the Western world, including many peasant societies and the mainland Irish; equally contrasting is the apparent lack of opprobrium attached to doing relief work on the roads and receiving the dole.

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871 Although 28 islanders have received some secondary education during the past 15 years (excluding priests and nuns), only 2 have attended university—both of them before the Second World War at University College, Dublin. Two women and a man have become teachers, and the former have returned to Inis Beag to teach in the national school. Most of the advanced students today are preparing to teach or nurse or are gaining technical skills, and it is not expected by their parents that they will return to the island to live permanently. Families are boastful of their members with advanced education, and those families without such representation often urge their children to do better in the local school, and try to muster financial support for their high school education if scholarships are not forthcoming. I was told by a man disgusted with the lack of interest in school shown by his son, "The man who uses a pen is better off than the man who uses a
557 spade or trammel net." Prestige also is gained through having a close relative
793 become a nun or priest or achieve success in the business or professional world,
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16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

women in the island and are attracted by what they consider to be a more rewarding life on the mainland and abroad, and so emigrate for these reasons. One of the most "pitied" girls in the island is a returned emigrant to the United States, who, despite being 24 years of age and suitable for marriage in every way, is not being courted, although it is known that she came back to Inis Beag to obtain a husband.

All of the conditions making for personality depression—the intrusion of priests into secular affairs, hypochondria, malicious gossiping, poverty, boredom, and isolation—also instigate emigration. My analysis assigns the secular excesses of the clergy and their implementation of the Jansenist doctrines of the Catholic Church in Ireland as the primary push factors in emigration and supports the contention made by Paul Blanshard that, "When all the reasons for a flight from Ireland have been mentioned, there still remains a suspicion that Irish young people are leaving their nation largely because it is a poor place in which to be happy and free. Have the priests created a civilization in which the chief values of youth and love are subordinate to Catholic discipline?" (Blanshard 1954:154). What "remains a suspicion" to Blanshard as regards all of Ireland is very much a reality in Inis Beag.

Other internal factors accounting for emigration which are considered important by the folk are the deadening of initiative by government services and subsidies and the institutionalization of emigration itself. While many islanders believe that the government ought to support even further the local economy in order to combat emigration, others feel that its present level of benevolence has had a deleterious effect on their character. Young people observing the indolence of their elders, according to this opinion, are shamed into seeking a more active life away from Inis Beag. In my estimation, this is a superficial cause, but the institutionalization of emigration is a vital factor, more recognized by youth than by their parents. Just as in the case of late marriage, emigration since famine times gradually has become an expectation—a "way of life"—and it will stimulate some folk to leave even though, in the estimation of their fellows, it might be advantageous for them to remain. When a young man says that he has an "itch to go to England and work for a spell," he usually is being motivated in this manner.

Among the external causes of emigration, the most significant are the growth of prosperity on the mainland and abroad, the influence of ever increasing numbers of tourists who visit and returned emigrants who come for short stays or to retire in Inis Beag, the impact of the mass media of communication, and the increasing availability of scholarship funds for children to attend secondary schools on the mainland. The United States has been a land of freedom, opportunity, and prosperity to the Irish since the early seventeenth century, but particularly during and after the famine (Approximately 1,000,000 Irish emigrated between 1846 and 1851, and another 1,500,000 perished from hunger, according to Woodham-Smith 1962:411.). The first record of substantial emigration from Inis Beag is in 1822, and from that time until the Second World War most islanders migrated to the United States, never to return. However, with the growth of prosperity in England after 1946, the stream of emigration shifted in that direction. Not only did jobs become plentiful across the Irish Sea then, but large, viable ethnic communities served by Irish clergy had sprung up in the larger cities. It became possi-

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inis Beag

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which contain a large portion of the natural flora—herbs and shrubs—of the island. Stone fences delimit many hundreds of plots which compose most of the two-square-mile land surface of Inis Beag.

The island boasts a post office with radio-telephone facilities, a "national school" in which three teachers instruct ninety pupils in the seven "standards," two provision shops with attached "pubs," a former coast guard station now housing the nurse and a knitting industry which employs local girls, a lighthouse, and a chapel served by a curate who resides nearby. Inis Beag lacks electricity and running water, and the only vehicles are several ass-drawn carts which are able to travel the narrow, fence-bordered trails. A small "steamer" carrying supplies, passengers, and mail to and from a mainland port visits the island at least once each week. That Inis Beag has experienced far less cultural change than other island communities of Ireland is largely due to the fact that, in absence of a deep water quay, the steamer has had to stand off the strand and be met by "canoes." Most of the tourists who come to the island stay only for the hours that the steamer is anchored and go ashore mainly for the thrill of riding in the canoes, which the island men row with consummate skill. Insofar as I can discover, the inhabitants of Inis Beag are less prone to visit the mainland than are the peoples of other Irish islands.

INIS BEAG
HISTORY AND CULTURE[2]

The prehistory and history of Inis Beag are recorded dramatically in a multitude of monuments and artifacts of stone and metal, including Neolithic axe-heads and kitchen middens, Copper-Bronze Age gallery grave tombs and burial mounds of earth and stone, an Iron Age promontory fort, and medieval Christian monasteries, churches, cemeteries, stone houses, and a sacred well, as well as a three-story tower house built by the political overlords of the island. Irish nativists claim that the contemporary folk are lineal descendants of ancient, once civilized

[2] The culture described herein is that of 1959-1960 and excludes important changes which have occurred since then, such as those resulting from the introduction of television, a summer language school for pupils from the mainland, and free secondary education.

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589 to join the priesthood; not only are spiritual blessings and prestige brought
593 to the family as a result, but their sons are at last removed from potential
[155] wives. Yet the Inis Beag man who wants to marry and is prevented from
[793] doing so by domineering and jealous parents is the subject of much gossip. Outwardly, at least, his plight is considered a "shame."

* 831 To the man in his late twenties and thirties who is secure in his
581 home and has established regularized patterns of conduct (and has a
589 mother who acts in most ways as a wife surrogate), the general responsi-
567 bilities of marriage, and specifically its sexual responsibility, are factors
[593] militating against his seeking a spouse. Some men who have land, the consent of their parents, and willing "sweethearts" will balk at a match because they are too happy "running with the lads," and if persuaded to marry, they will try to retain as much of their bachelor role as possible within marriage. It was hinted to my wife and me on several occasions that particular island celibates almost married several times in succession, only to find the sexual commitment too difficult to make at the last moment.

162 Three other causes of late marriage and the single estate in Inis Beag
167 must be mentioned. Girls are more dissatisfied with their future lot than
582 are boys and men and are emigrating at ever younger ages, thus sharply
589 reducing the number of eligible females. During the 1950–1959 period, the average age at which girls emigrate dropped below twenty-one years.
* [871] Each year more of them attend schools on the mainland and thus are
[484] more exposed to stimuli which promote emigration. Mothers are puzzled
[178] at the increasing exodus of their daughters, since women today have a far easier time than they did a generation or two ago; but some are glad
182 to see them escape the drudgery and boredom of island existence. Since
582 late marriage has been a persistent phenomenon in Ireland since the great famine, it has become institutionalized and serves as an expectation for young people. We heard Inis Beag adults assert that marriage should be postponed to conform to island mores; this usually was buttressed by
829 a rationale of males not having "enough sense" to marry until they are
[561] nearly forty years of age. Reflected in this rationale is the male age-grading conceptualized by the folk: a man is a "boy" or "lad" until forty, an adult until sixty, middle-aged until eighty, and aged after that (exhilarating to the American anthropologist approaching forty who comes from a society obsessed with the "cult of youth"). A final cause, often
582 articulated by the islanders, is the fact that divorce is impossible in
[586] Ireland, therefore the choice of a spouse must be well considered. It